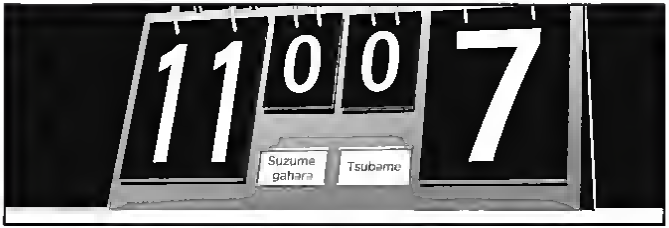
CHAPTER 16 『TSUKINOWA KUMAMI』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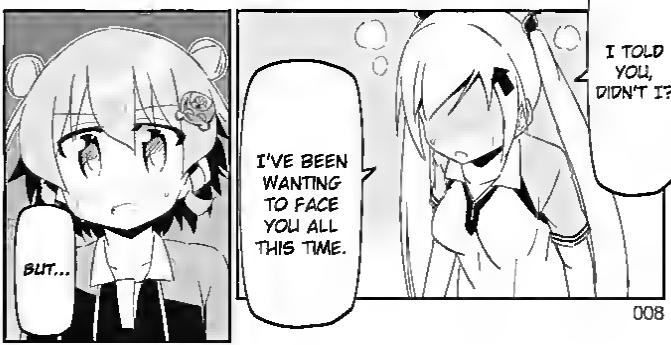
Suzume gahara
Tsubame

KUMAMI,
IS THAT REALLY ALL YOU'VE GOT?


I TOLD YOU, DIDN'T I?
I'VE BEEN WANTING TO FACE YOU ALL THIS TIME.
BUT...

A MATCH LIKE THIS
IS NOT WHAT I HAD IN MIND.
...
UHYOO!
FIRST GAME TO AGARI!
YOU CAN DEFINITELY BEAT HER LIKE THIS!
YEAH!

KUMAMI IS NOT THIS WEAK!
JUST KEEP THIS UP AND YOU'LL FINISH HER RIGHT AWAY!
天下
旋風
ほ
パーン パーン
I'M JUST SAYING I CAN'T LET MY GUARD DOWN NOW!
AH SORRY
I'M NOT ANGRY OR ANY-THING

...
AGARI-CHAN...
PLAYING KUMAMI IS PROBABLY NOT EASY FOR HER...
TIME FOR THE SECOND GAME!
AGARI
THAT'S NOT HOW YOU USUALLY PLAY AT ALL!
KUMAMI! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?!
YOU ALWAYS HAVE, LIKE, THIS MENACING AURA AROUND YOU!
CALM DOWN, IRORI-SAN.
SHE'S FIGHTING AGAINST HER OLD TEAMMATES
YOU CAN'T BLAME HER FOR FEELING SOME HESITATION.
T-THAT MIGHT BE TRUE, BUT...

A-CHAN HAS CHANGED.
THE A-CHAN I KNOW IS...
NO LONGER HERE.
WELL, THEN...
YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO SHOW HER HOW YOU'VE CHANGED TOO.
WON'T YOU SHOW US
THE REAL YOU?

SECOND GAME
すりすり
まままま
上矢
カカカカカカ
...
THE REAL ME..

IF I START PLAYING LIKE THAT...
I WON'T BE ABLE TO HOLD IT BACK.
IF THAT HAPPENS, I'LL...
I'LL DEFINITELY DESTROY A-CHAN.

(AGARI)
5 - 1
(KUMAMI)
YEAH!
I... BUT...

KUMAMI, I GOT YOU A PRESENT!
EEH! LEMME SEE! LEMME SEE!
やったぬっ!!
Ta dah♪
A competition swimsuit♪
...
COM... PETI-TION?
YES!
REMEMBER THAT SWIMMING COMPETITION LAST WEEK ON TV? OH, IT WAS SO MOVING!
I'M SURE YOU'D BE GREAT AT IT!
TSUKINOWA KUMAMI
4TH YEAR OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

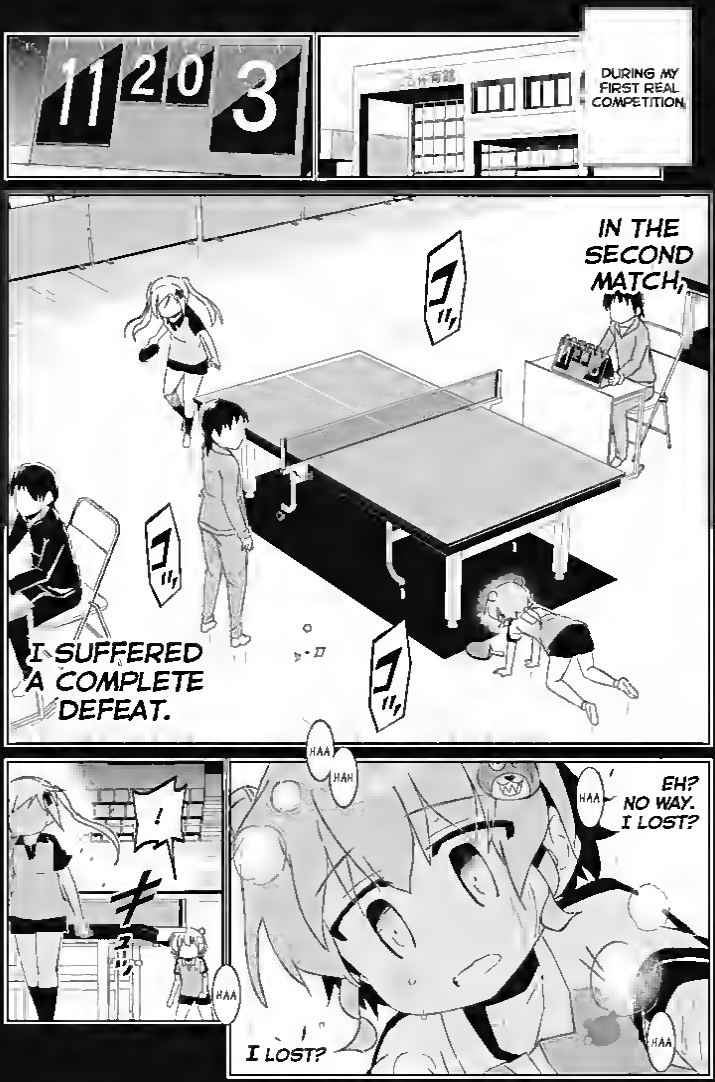
TL NOTE: KITAMURA KUSUO, OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST SWIMMER.

Caligraphy Competition Award Ceremony
"On the Future of Bears."
Essay Award Ceremony
I'D BE NUMBER ONE AT IT.
NO MATTER WHAT I DID,
POSSIBLY BECAUSE OF THAT AND BEING A RATHER TALENTED GIRL
Amazing!
Sumire-chan!
I'D BE GETTING RESULTS BETTER THAN EVERYONE ELSE'S, LIKE A REAL GENIUS
NO MATTER THE ACTIVITY, AS SOON AS I GOT THE HANG OF IT,
I JUST COULDN'T REALLY FEEL PASSIONATE ABOUT ANYTHING.
BUT I WASN'T REALLY DOING ANY OF THAT BECAUSE I WANTED TO EITHER. SO...
IT'S NOT AS IF I DIDN'T ENJOY ALL OF THE COMPLIMENTS FROM THE PEOPLE AROUND ME...
...

KUMAMI, I GOT YOU A PRESENT!
EEH! WHAT IS IT?
やったね!!!
Ta dah♪
A ping pong paddle♪
...
PING... PONG?
YES!
REMEMBER THAT PING PONG COMPETITION LAST WEEK ON TV? OH, IT WAS SO MOVING!
I'M SURE YOU'D BE GREAT AT IT!

TL NOTE: TIMO BOLL, FORMER #1 IN THE TABBLE TENNIS WORLD RANKINGS.

I STARTED GOING TO TABLE TENNIS CLASSES.
BLACK PANTHER TABLE TENNIS CENTER
AS USUAL, I STOOD OUT FROM THE OTHERS.
WOW!
KUMA-CHAAAN!
KUMA-CHAN, YOU'RE ALREADY UP TO A-CLASS?
NOBODY HER AGE STANDS A CHANCE AGAINST HER!
ONCE AGAIN,
IT WAS A PIECE OF CAKE.
THIS IS NO FUN...
HOW-EVER...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DURING MY FIRST REAL COMPETITION,
IN THE SECOND MATCH,
I SUFFERED A COMPLETE DEFEAT.
!
HAA
HAH
HAA
EH? NO WAY. I LOST?
I LOST?
HAA
HAA

AH, WAIT! WHAT'S ...
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?!
WHO, ME?
I'M KAMIYA.
KAMIYA AGARI.
THE GIRL WHO'LL BE NUMBER ONE AT TABLE TENNIS.
...!
...
UH?

AH, I SEE.
THIS FEELING...
THE TEARS WON'T STOP.
WHAT'S HAPPENING?
THIS IS WHAT THEY CALL "FRUSTRATION."
I'D FACED FAILURE FOR THE FIRST TIME.
IN A-CHAN'S HANDS...

AGARI.
KAMIYA
...
FROM THAT DAY ON,
I STARTED TAKING TABLE TENNIS SERIOUSLY
My dear Kumamis
Weekly Sch
M
Tu
W
Th
F
Sa
Su
Table Tenn
Table Tennis
Piano
Table Tennis
Ventriloquy
Table Tennis
Table Tennis
I DIDN'T HAVE OUTSTANDING RESULTS.
THAT NEW REALITY WAS SO FRESH...
FOR THE FIRST TIME A DIFFICULTY HAD APPEARED BEFORE ME
SAD

I WAS SUCKED INTO TABLE TENNIS.
KAMIYA-SAN WAS SO STRONG.
I HOPE WE CAN MEET AGAIN
I WANT TO PLAY AGAINST A-CHAN ONE MORE TIME.
AH! AAH A-CHAN!
I JUST CALLED HER A-CHAN!
I CAN'T BELIEVE I SAID THAT!
MOST OF ALL I JUST COULDN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT A-CHAN.
KUMA-CHAN?!
That's too fast!

THE ONLY PERSON TO MAKE ME EXPERIENCE THE TASTE OF DEFEAT.
I have to buy a new notebook.
EVER SINCE THAT DAY,
I FILLED ALL OF TODAY'S DIARY ENTRY WITH A-CHAN'S NAME!
OH NO!
I WAS COMPLETELY ENGROSSED WITH A-CHAN.
A-CHAN!!
A-CH N...!
A-CHAN...
BUT NOW I FELT DETER-MINED FOR THE FIRST
Weekly Schedule
M Table Tennis
Tu Table Tennis
W Table Tennis
Th Table Tennis
F Table Tennis
Sa Table Tennis
Su Table Tennis
I HAD NEVER BEEN ABLE TO BECOME PASSIONATE ABOUT ANYTHING BEFORE

WAIT FOR ME, A-CHAN.
I'LL BECOME STRONGER. I'LL BECOME SOMEONE WORTHY OF FACING YOU!
A-CHAN GAVE ME SOMETHING WORTH LIVING FOR.
MY DAYS WERE FILLED WITH NOTHING BUT TABLE TENNIS.
WHEN THAT DAY COMES, PLEASE...
AS I DREAMED ABOUT THE DAY WHEN I'D BE ABLE TO PLAY AGAINST A-CHAN AGAIN
THEN I ENTERED MIDDLE SCHOOL

THAT WAS WHEN
I GOT TO MEET A-CHAN AGAIN.
Table Tennis Club

WE GOT A LOT OF PROMISING NEW MEMBERS THIS YEAR!
SPECIALLY THAT GIRL, KAMIYA-SAN. SHE'S READY FOR ACTION ALREADY.
HAA HAA KAMIYA-SAN IS TOO GOOD.
AMONG US FIRST YEARS, NOBODY STANDS A CHANCE AGAINST HER.
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SO. WHO'S NEXT?! WHO WANTS TO PLAY AGAINST ME?!
THEN... IT'S MY TURN
LONG TIME NO SEE,
A-CHA...
KAMIYA-SAN.

UH? UM...
I'M TSUKINOWA KUMAMI, WE PLAYED AGAINST EACH OTHER AT A COMPETITION ONCE. YOU DON'T REMEMBER?
SORRY... IT'S KINDA...
A-AH, NO, IT'S FINE! I LOST TERRIBLY THAT DAY, I WOULDN'T EXPECT YOU TO REMEMBER!
REALLY?
WELL, NICE TO MEET YOU, UM... TSUKINOWA-SAN!
YES!
YOU'VE BEEN ON MY MIND
EVERY SINGLE DAY.
STILL...
EVEN IF YOU DON'T REMEMBER ME,
MY HEART WON'T STOP POUND-ING
OH NO...

LOVE-ALL.
I WANTED TO SEE YOU SO BADLY!
HOW I WANTED TO SEE YOU...
ガバッ
I TRIED ENTERING MANY CONTESTS SINCE THEN, BUT I COULD NEVER FIND YOU!
WHO WOULD'VE THOUGHT WE'D MEET AGAIN LIKE THIS?
THIS IS A MIRACLE! A MIRACLE, A MIRACLE!

!!
I'VE BEEN PRACTICING A LOT, YOU KNOW?
I PRACTICED AND PRACTICED, ALL SO I COULD BECOME AN OPPONENT WORTHY OF YOU!
WHAT DO YOU THINK? AM I WEIRD?
I WANT MORE!
TO SEE YOU MORE...
TO FEEL YOU MORE...
A-CHAN,
I...

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AS THE DAYS WENT BY AND I PRACTICED WITH A-CHAN,
MY FEELINGS FOR HER ONLY GREW MORE INTENSE.
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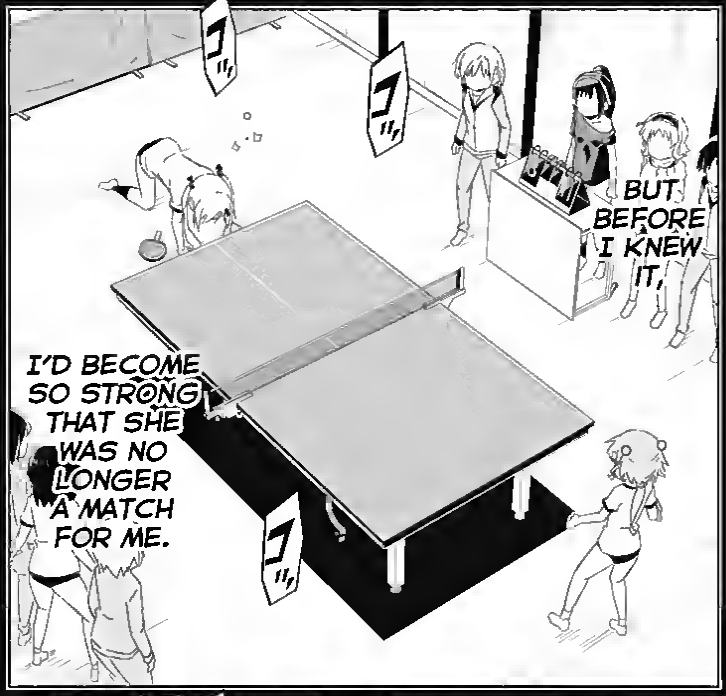
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BUT BEFORE I KNEW IT,
I'D BECOME SO STRONG THAT SHE WAS NO LONGER A MATCH FOR ME.

A-...! KAMIYA-SAN!
...

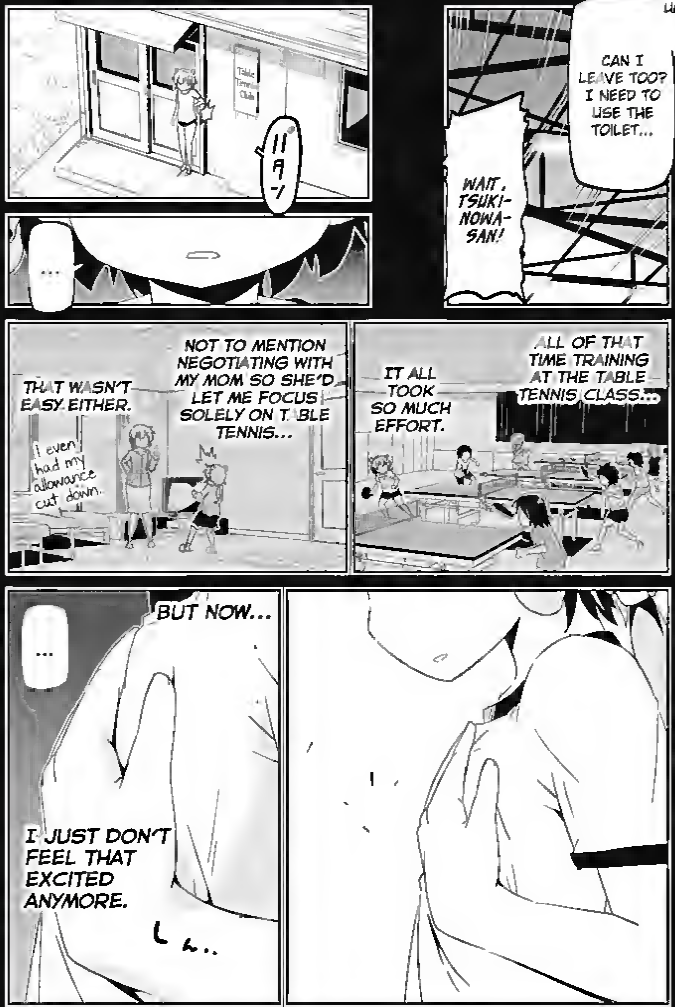
Table Tennis Club
HA-
...
UM...
CAN I LEAVE TOO? I NEED TO USE THE TOILET...
WAIT, TSUKINOWA-SAN!
ALL OF THAT TIME TRAINING AT THE TABLE TENNIS CLASS...
IT ALL TOOK SO MUCH EFFORT.
NOT TO MENTION NEGOTIATING WITH MY MOM SO SHE'D LET ME FOCUS SOLELY ON TABLE TENNIS...
I even had my allowance cut down.
THAT WASN'T EASY EITHER.
BUT NOW...
...
I JUST DON'T FEEL THAT EXCITED ANYMORE.
Hn..

IN THE END, TABLE TENNIS WAS JUST LIKE EVERYTHING ELSE...
UNBEARABLY BORING.
THAT'S IT, I'M DONE.
NO MORE PING PONG FOR ME.
SOB
...?
A VOICE?
SOB
SOB

SOB
SOB
SOB

SOB
SOB
IS SHE CRYING BECAUSE SHE LOST TO ME JUST NOW?
EH... SHE'S CRYING?
BECAUSE OF THAT ONE LITTLE MATCH?
...

HUH?
WHAT'S THIS?
WHAT'S THIS BURNING FEELING DEEP IN MY CHEST?
HUH? NO...
WHAT'S GOING ON?

THIS POUNDING IN MY CHEST...
JUST WON'T STOP!
AROUND A-CHAN, MY PERSONALITY
WAS GETTING MORE AND MORE TWISTED.

So strong!
ADVENTURER WANKO